

Response to Comments

## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This introduction explains the organization and how to use Volume II, Responses to Public Comments, of the California High-Speed Train Program EIR/EIS. Persons listed in this volume, Response to Comments, who submitted responsible written comments or provided oral testimony and who also gave their mailing addresses are being provided with an electronic copy of the Final Program EIR/EIS and appendices. Individual letters and comments included and addressed in this volume are organized and numbered with acronyms as follows:

- Federal Agencies – AF (Chapter 2)
- State Agencies – AS (Chapter 3)
- Local Agencies – AL (Chapter 4)
- Organizations – O (Chapter 5)
- Individuals – I (Chapter 6)
- Public Hearings – PH (Chapter 7)
- Web Comment (comments sent electronically) – W (Chapter 8)

Each written submission and oral presentation can be found under the appropriate category, by name, or if representing an organization, the name of their organization. If a commenter gave oral or written testimony at one of the public hearings, they will find their comments, submissions and responses under "Public Hearings". Those that sent comments via the Authority's website will find their comments and response under "Web Comments". Each written comment letter sent to the Authority or FRA was assigned an alphanumeric identifier based upon when their letter was received. For example the USEPA comment letter is found under "Federal Agencies" and their comment letter has been designated as AF008. Each comment letter and the public hearing transcript has brackets in the right hand margin identifying the individual responsible for the comments and assigning identification numbers for each comment. Some letters or oral statements have been treated as a single comment, whereas in others multiple comments have been identified, numbered and responded to individually. Again, using the USEPA as an example, 32 different responsible comments were identified in this comment letter (AF008-1 through AF008-32). The responses to comment(s) are located at the end of each letter or transcript. Each response is labeled with the letter/testimony identifier and comment number (such as AF008-1) that relates back to that particular bracketed comment. Two organized mailings from the Loma Prieta Chapter of the Sierra Club were received: a stand-alone postcard and a form letter. During the review period, 173 signed copies of the postcard were received and 285 signed copies of the form letter were received. An additional 956 copies of the postcard were received before the review period. A single postcard was used to represent each of these mailings (comment letters I143 and I144). Occasionally, postcards were received that looked significantly different from the organized mailings, though the text was the same, and these postcards were treated as separate comment letters.

Standard responses have been provided to the most common issues raised in public and agency letters or oral testimony on the Draft Program EIR/EIS. Many of the individual responses to comments contain a cross-reference to the applicable standard response to further respond to the comment or to provide additional explanation and information. In some cases, the applicable standard response may fully respond to the individual comment. Standard responses also refer the reader to revised text in the Final Program EIR/EIS.

Each standard response addresses multiple comments on the same or related issues, and is designed to provide a comprehensive answer to a range of key environmental concerns and issues raised. The

standard responses are organized according to the organization of the Draft Program EIR/EIS. In other words, the comments that addressed the issues in Chapter 2 Alternatives of the Draft Program EIR/EIS are addressed in the standard responses that begin with the number 2.

Chapter 8 Public and Agency Involvement of the Final Program EIR/EIS identifies areas of common concern revealed in comments on the Draft Program EIR/EIS. These areas of common concern are listed below along with associated references to standard responses:

- Opposition to HST alignment options through Henry Coe State Park: *see standard response 6.3.1*
- Support for the investigation of the Altamont Pass as an HST alignment option between the Central Valley and the Bay Area: *see standard response 2.18.1*
- Support for the Antelope Valley HST alignment (with a station at Palmdale) for crossing the Tehachapi Mountains between the Central Valley and Los Angeles: *see standard response 6.23.1*
- Questions about the sufficiency of the Program EIR/EIS to meet CEQA and NEPA requirements because of a perceived lack of detail and/or design options excluded (primarily concerning the Altamont Pass): *see standard responses 3.15.2, 3.15.4, 3.15.6, 3.15.13, 2.34.6, 2.18.1*
- Support and opposition for specific alignment options between the Bay Area and Central Valley (Pacheco Pass and Diablo Range Northern Crossing option): *see standard response 6.3.1*
- Opposition to alignment options and concerns about impacts to Taylor Yards and the Cornfield site in Los Angeles. Many of the comments relating to Taylor Yards and the Cornfield site requested an extension of the comment period: *see standard responses 6.24.2 and 8.1.1*
- Support for Castle Air Force Base as the HST station location and maintenance facility: *see standard responses 6.19.1 and 2.35.1*
- Opposition to the CCT alignment option for HST service between Sacramento and Stockton: *see standard response 6.12.1*
- Opposition to conventional rail improvement tunneling options through Del Mar, and options with potential impacts to lagoons: *see standard response 6.42.1*
- Support and opposition for the UPRR alignment options between Fresno and Bakersfield (with a potential station at Visalia): *see standard response 6.15.4*
- Opposition to a potential HST station at Los Banos: *see standard response 6.3.1*
- Support for the Transbay Terminal as the Downtown San Francisco HST terminus: *see standard responses 6.2.3 and 6.3.1*
- Concerns relating to the potential for the HST Alternative to induce growth: *see standard responses 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.2.3, 5.2.4, 5.2.5, and 3.1.2*
- Questions about how the Program EIR/EIS addresses potential mitigation measures: *see standard response 3.15.13.*

Other areas of common interest include:

- Impacts on wildlife movement corridors/level of detail: *see standard responses 3.4.1, 3.15.2, and 3.15.9*
- Public and agency involvement: *see standard responses 8.1.1 and 8.1.16*
- Nature of envelope or methodology used for impacts analysis: *see standard responses 3.15.3, 3.15.7, and 3.15.13*
- Phasing of HST system: *see standard response 10.1.7*
- Coordination with Native American tribes and respect for Native American cultural resources: *see standard responses 10.1.14 and 3.12.1*

The California High Speed Train Program EIR/EIS consists of the Draft Program EIR/EIS, oral and written comments on the Draft Program EIR/EIS, and the Final Program EIR/EIS. The Final Program EIR/EIS contains revised analysis and text, plus the comments and responses to comments on the Draft Program EIR/EIS. As explained in the Final Program EIR/EIS, this is the first phase of a two-tiered environmental review process, and the analysis has been prepared for the first and programmatic-level of review and consideration of early policy decisions on the high-speed train system. These documents have been prepared to support Authority and FRA decisions on the following:

1. To decide whether to pursue a high speed train system, involving steel-wheel-on-steel-rail technology along certain conceptual corridors shown in Figures 2.6-13 and 2.6-14 and designed to help meet California's increasing demand for transportation, versus doing nothing, or recommending a modal alternative; and
2. To determine which of the conceptual corridors, alignments, and station options evaluated in the Program EIR/EIS can be eliminated from consideration and which to select for further consideration in the tiered environmental reviews to be prepared subsequent to the Program EIR/EIS, if the Co-lead agencies choose to pursue the high speed train system.

The programmatic level of analysis presented in the Program EIR/EIS is appropriate for making these two basic decisions. It analyzes the environmental effects at a more generalized level to provide the decision makers with sufficient information to decide whether to continue with the process to pursue a high-speed rail system, and which conceptual corridor alignments to continue to consider. If the Authority and the FRA decide to do so, they will consider the more site-specific decisions in the more detailed project level environmental review and decision making.